

Testimony before the CGA Appropriations Committee
Public Hearing on Proposed FY 23 Adjustments for Higher Education Agencies
February 22, 2022
Submitted by Nicles Lefakis

Thank you, Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Hartley, Representatives Dathan and Nolan, and members of the Appropriations Committee for the opportunity to address you today.

My name is Nick Lefakis. I am a resident of Enfield, CT.

I have worked at Asnuntuck Community College as an Adjunct Professor since the Fall 2021 semester. Before that, I worked as a full-time Professor from August 1979 until June 2020, 41 years.

I am writing to express my strong support for ensuring our community college system is sufficiently funded so we can serve our students and communities.

I support the Board of Regents request for additional funding for our community college system. Increased funding is critically necessary to ensure we can provide high-quality services to our students and communities. We have seen our services in our community colleges decline due to understaffing and insufficient resources.

In the recent Board of Regents Finance Meeting, the BOR Finance Committee proposed a 5% tuition increase for students. I disagree with our community college system increasing tuition on our students. I disagree with tuition increases because so many of our students are already struggling to balance their school, work, and family demands. Increasing tuition continues to shift the burden of education to those in our communities with the least resources.

The Board of Regents for Higher Education is currently threatening to layoff student-facing community college employees. This is reprehensible, particularly given the fact that over the past three years the Board of Regents and CSCU managers have hired dozens of managers – Regional Presidents, Vice Presidents, Associate Vice Presidents – costing millions of dollars. These management positions are completely redundant, wasteful, and are siphoning resources away from community college campuses.

When I started to work for the Community Colleges in 1979, and for the years before the “merger,” there were 5 steps between the people we serve—our students, and the top management official.

1. Student; 2. Professor; 3. Academic Dean; 4. College President; 5. Chancellor—last serving was Marc Herzog.

Now, with the “cost saving merger” there are 7 steps between the people we serve and the top management official.

1. Student; 2. Professor; 3. Academic Dean; 4. Campus CEO; 5. Regional President; 6. Community College President; 7. President Cheng.

The Campus CEO salary is close to the previous campus President’s salary. So, we have in effect 4 levels of President.

Our public higher education system needs more resources so we can fulfill our mission of providing pathways to higher education, gainful employment, and life-changing knowledge and skills to the

residents of CT. The allocation of resources should shift away from Management and toward the faculty and staff that have face-to-face contact with the people we serve.

Thank you for all for your efforts to support this.

Nicles (Nick) Lefakis, Professor Emeritus